

How to Buy a New Truck

By Dave Hoffman

Trucks have come a long way in the past years. Instead of a few similar basic models with a few styling variations, trucks now come in all sorts of varieties from trucks created specifically to specialize in hauling cargo to luxury filled trucks filled with comfortable optional amenities. There are work trucks for basic hauling and four by four off road models. Whether you need to carry your kayak and ATV or slabs of building materials, there are truck choices out there to match your lifestyle.

The first step to purchasing any new vehicle is to take an inventory of what features you need or want your truck to have. You want to make sure you get enough truck for your needs, but for financial and space reasons, there is no reason to buy something too large or powerful. Full size trucks cost from a little more than \$20,000 to over \$50,000. Compact trucks are even less expensive.

When you begin to shop around, you will notice variability in truck sizes. Make sure the truck you select fits in your parking space or garage.

If you need a truck to pull an average size trailer or boat, a compact truck may do. Towing from 3000 to 7000 pounds, a compact truck takes up less room and get better gas mileage than a full size truck. Some manufacturers make mid sized trucks as well. Compact trucks come with four or six cylinder engines.

There are a variety of options of truck beds. Beds range in length from six and a half to eight feet, although models with more passenger space may have smaller beds. Some cars come with adjustable tie down straps, lights, or built in storage compartments. Remember that trucks with longer beds are less maneuverable than shorter trucks. Usually you can extend the bed by folding down the back end and some have bed extenders for carrying longer cargo with the back down.

Most full size trucks have a towing capacity of between 8,000 and 10,000 pounds. With the right suspension configuration and engine, they can tow up to 12,000 pounds. Full size trucks can come with six, eight, or 10 cylinder engines, and some even come with diesel engines. If gas mileage is more important to you than towing capacity you should consider a truck with a smaller

engine. 10 MPG can save you as much as \$550 a year based on driving 15,000 miles. Visit the US Environmental Protection Agency's www.fueleconomy.gov, for a comparison.

Trucks come with either automatic or manual transmissions, and come with rear wheel or four wheel drive. Rear wheel drive is less expensive to buy, and gets better mileage. If you live and work in a climate without snow or ice and stick mostly to paved roads, a rear wheel drive truck may be the best choice. If you need to drive under winter conditions or drive off road, four wheel drive is the best option. Some models can switch between two and four wheel drive. There are also options for electronic traction control, and limited-slip or locking differentials, which regulate the speed of the wheels.

The next thing to consider is cab size. There are three kinds of cabs, standard cab, extended cab and crew cab. A standard cab has two doors and bucket or bench seating, comfortably seating two or three people. An extended cab has some storage behind the front seats for groceries or packages and two small jump seats where children may sit. They may have small rear doors for easier access to the back. The biggest kind of cab is a crew cab. A crew cab has two rows of seat and four full size doors.

Pay attention to how high off of the ground the truck is. If it is high, pay attention to how easy it is to climb in for the people who need to get in.

Most pickup trucks can carry a payload of a half ton in the bed. Some larger ones can support three quarters to a whole ton. Be aware that tons with a heavier payload capacity often have stiffer suspensions, making for a less comfortable ride.

Once you know what features you want in a truck, it's time to shop around. Keep on truckin!